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SUBJECT: MUTHARIKA'S CABINET BALOONS TO 44 POSTS

LILONGWE 00000361 001.2 OF 003

¶1. (SBU) Summary: President Mutharika extensively reshuffled his cabinet on May 10, firing two ministers outright and adding nine new ministers or deputy ministers, to bring the total cabinet positions up to 44 (two of which Mutharika has filled himself). This is the largest cabinet since former President Muluzi's group of 46 ministers, and is widely seen as an effort to reward the President's supporters in Parliament, while punishing those who refuse to join his political party. Mutharika, who criticized Muluzi's cabinet size and promised to have a "lean" cabinet when he came into office, has increased the cabinet each year in office, after starting with only 28 ministerial positions in 2004. However, this latest reshuffle should not improve the government's strength in Parliament, where it currently has a minority, as primarily those already in the party have been given plum ministerial posts. Key ministries affected include the Ministry of Information and Tourism (which has been split into two ministries), the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Minister of Justice Bazuka Mhango and Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture Jaffalie Mussa were both relieved of their ministerial portfolios outright. While both Mhango and Mussa are Members of Parliament, neither had officially joined President Mutharika's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which most believe led to their removal from office. It is unclear at this time whether both, or either one individually, will remain with the government, or will now officially join the opposition. Of the new cabinet members, only two had been sitting with the opposition parties, new Deputy Minister for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly Yunus Mussa and new Deputy Minister of Health Felton Mulli. The other new ministers comprise back-benchers already within the DPP.

¶3. (SBU) The biggest change involved in the reshuffle is the split of the Ministry of Information and Tourism into two separate ministries--the Ministry of Information and Civic Education, and the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture. The outspoken Patricia Kaliati--widely despised by many local tourist operators--has been retained as Minister of Information, but will no longer have dominion over tourism, where Callista Chimombo will serve as Minister. Aside from the personalities involved, this will hopefully put more emphasis on Malawi's tourist sector, one of the few areas with potential for significant growth.

¶4. (SBU) The new Minister of National Defense, Bob Khamisa, previously held the post of Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security, while former Defense Minister Davis Katsonga has been moved to the Office of President and Cabinet as Minister for Presidential and Parliamentary Affairs. Khamisa has been a MP since 1999, though he only joined Mutharika's government in 2006 after defecting from the opposition. One of the few "colored" (bi-racial) parliamentarians, Khamisa comes from a wealthy family involved in the transport business and is considered to be down to earth and easy to work.

¶5. (SBU) President Mutharika has assumed the title of Minister of Education, replacing former Minister Anna Kachiko who had been involved in a scandal over reports regarding her lack of a high school diploma. Mutharika, who is keen to promote a new Science and Technology University in Lilongwe and a private University in his home district of Thyolo, will have two Deputy Ministers serving under him. Mutharika will also retain the position of Minister of Agriculture, which he assumed in late 2006.

¶6. (SBU) Mutharika has also finally filled the portfolio of Minister of Economic Planning and Development, which will be manned by former opposition MP Ted Kalebe. Kalebe had previously been serving as Deputy Minister of Finance, where he managed the Debt and Aid section. Economic Planning and Development is the key partner ministry to Malawi's Millenium Challenge Threshold plan program.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: The swelling of Mutharika's cabinet is a purely political move, however it serves as another example of how the President has disappointed his most sincere supporters, and the reshuffle has been sharply criticized in the press. The Cabinet now makes up almost 60 percent of the entire DPP caucus in Parliament, an astounding figure. A key tenet of his 2004 presidential acceptance speech was Mutharika's pledge to maintain a "lean" cabinet, with

LILONGWE 00000361 002.2 OF 003

ministers appointed based upon merit. This latest reshuffle flies squarely in the face of those promises, and sends a signal that the President is now more focused on the 2009 election than his erstwhile reform agenda.

¶8. (SBU) Politically, what is more puzzling than the creation of the additional posts is the President's choices to fill them. Mutharika hasn't used the additional positions to add meaningfully to his party's ranks. Only two MPs who have switched sides from the opposition to government, and Mutharika loses the two ministers who have been fired, rendering no net change in the number of DPP MPs. This does nothing to help the DPP in parliament, and makes meaningful legislation no easier to pass. It would not have been difficult to entice a number of opposition members to cross over to government to take up ministerial posts. Instead, Mutharika has rewarded those already with the DPP who had been serving as back-benchers, and left his party just as weak as it always has been--yet another show of Mutharika's political inexperience and lack of competent political advisors. End Comment.

Complete Cabinet List

¶1. Bingu Wa Mutharika - President; Minister of Agriculture; Minister of Education

¶2. Cassim Chilumpha - Vice President

¶3. Goodall Gondwe - Minister of Finance

¶4. Henry Chimunthu Banda - Minister of Energy and Mines; Leader of the House

¶5. Davis Katsonga - Minister of Presidential and

Parliamentary Affairs

¶6. George Chaponda - Minister of Local Government and Rural Development

¶7. Ken Lipenga - Minister of Industry and Trade; Deputy Leader of the House

¶8. Joyce Banda - Minister of Foreign Affairs

¶9. Henry Mussa - Minister of Transport, Public Works and Housing

¶10. Henry Phoya - Minister of Justice

¶11. Kate Kainga Kaluluma - Minister of Women and Child Development

¶12. Patricia Kaliati - Minister of Information and Civic Education

¶13. John Khumbo Chirwa - Minister of Lands and Natural Resources

¶14. Anna Kachikho - Minister of Labour

¶15. Mohammed Sidik Mia - Minister of Irrigation and Water Development

¶16. Marjorie Ngaunje - Minister of Health

¶17. Bob Khamisa - Minister of National Defence

¶18. Clement Khembo - Minister of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly

¶19. Khumbo Kachali - Minister of Youth Development and Sports

¶20. Ernest Malenga - Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security

¶21. Ted Kalebe - Minister of Economic Planning and Development

¶22. Callista Chapola Chimombo - Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture

¶23. Richard Msowoya - Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Technology (Higher Education, Science and Technology)

¶24. Henri Mumba - Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

LILONGWE 00000361 003.2 OF 003

¶25. Roy Commsy - Deputy Minister of Mines

¶26. Frank Mwenifumbo - Deputy Minister of Irrigation and Water Development

¶27. Charles Mchacha - Deputy Minister of Youth Development and Sports

¶28. John Bande - Deputy Minister of Information and Civic Education

¶29. Davie Ngulinga - Deputy Minister of Local Government and Rural Development

¶30. Rashid Gaffar - Deputy Minister of Lands and Natural Resources

¶31. Binton Kutsaira - Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Security

¶32. Sumon Kaunda - Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security

¶33. Aaron Sangala - Deputy Minister of Women and Child Development

¶34. Olive Masanza - Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Technology (Primary and Secondary Education)

¶35. Lewis Kadammanja - Deputy Minister of Finance

¶36. Ellock Maotcha Banda - Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade

¶37. Gift Mwamondwe - Deputy Minister of Transport, Public Works and Housing

¶38. Roy Chizimba - Deputy Minister of Economic Planning and Development

¶39. Borniface Cimpokosera - Deputy Minister of Labour

¶40. Felton Mulli - Deputy Minister of Health

¶41. Yunus Mussa - Deputy Minister of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly

¶42. Billy Kaunda - Deputy Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture
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